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A Step Toward Church Union

RECENTLY representatives of nine denominations* met at Seabury House in Greenwich, Connecticut, to consider the possibility of taking steps now looking toward an eventual union between those denominations. It was hoped that other denominations would soon cooperate in this venture.

The meeting was a success in the sense that a permanent organization was formed to make possible a continuous process of discussion between these and other churches in order to find the way to union. It may be that the publicity which the meeting received has caused many people to expect tangible results much sooner than is at all possible. Those who have had experience with the process by which two or more denominations have been united know that it is at best a painfully slow process. But there is ground for saying that at Greenwich the process was begun. The fact that one such union is now being contested in a Brooklyn court by a small minority in one of the uniting denominations should remind us of some of the hurdles ahead.

This new move toward church union is based upon the fact that already there are many denominations in America which are not divided by any serious differences of faith or theology. There are problems of polity having to do with the independence of the local church, and with the degree of centralization in the larger church, which may cause much difficulty; but these do not involve what is regarded as essential Christian faith, and it may be possible to arrive at solutions which will enrich the lives of all the churches. These problems are a much less serious barrier to union than differences over episcopal ordination.

These denominations are already, in large measure, one in faith. What differences of faith there are among them are found within each denomination, and they do not separate the denominations

from one another. It is truly astonishing to observe the extent to which the same theological books are used in all of these denominations. No one of them regards itself as having any monopoly on Christian truth. Each one of them sees itself as part of a larger whole in which much that it teaches can be corrected or enriched. There is among them, with one partial exception, no barrier to inter-communion. Members pass freely from one denomination to another. Ministers may pass from one to another without being re-ordained. This is not theological indifference. On the contrary, among them the understanding of the gospel has, in recent years, gained in theological content, but it happens to be the case that theological convictions cut across the present denominational lines, and the preservation of those lines has become theologically irrelevant.

In what direction is it likely that plans for union will take these churches? It is too early to say anything definite. There are two general tendencies which are strongly recommended. One would keep the present denominational structures to a considerable extent and develop more significant symbols of religious unity between them, and an over-all type of federal organization having more important functions than any existing federations. Dr. Stanley Jones has a plan of Federal Union which has won a great deal of support in the churches, but it can be criticized on the ground that it does not go far enough beyond the present Federal Council of Churches. Even if his Federal Union plan were to be put into effect, there would still be need of a closer form of union between denominations that are not divided by theological differences within the wider framework which he envisages. Actually, his crusade for Federal Union, even if the plan itself is open to criticism, helps to prepare the people in the churches for any plan for union that may be developed.

The other type of proposal would seek to supplant the present denominational structures with new regional units which would include the churches and the people of all of the uniting denominations within the region; and the main issue would be to find ways

*The denominations represented were as follows: The Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Evangelical and Reformed Church, the Congregational-Christian Churches, the Disciples of Christ, the A.M.E. Zion Church, the Moravian Church (Northern Province), the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, and the National Council of Community Churches.

of relating the local church to the regional unit, and the regional unit to national units. As Dr. Charles Clayton Morrison suggests, the regional units would be brought together federally on a national basis.

In all of this discussion it is important to avoid any tendency to set *organic* over against *federal* forms of union. The convictions of church people must not become hardened around those words, the meaning of which is really quite fluid and which can only be understood in the context of a particular plan of union. Any plan of union needs to provide for full mutual recognition and for the sense of membership in a single Christian church. These are essential aspects of organic union and are necessary for a completely united approach to evangelism, missions and church extension. But any plan of union must make use of the federal principle in the distribution of power in order to avoid a vast centralized ecclesiastical machine.

Such a union as is here contemplated would go far to enable American Protestantism to express the Christian unity that already exists within it. It would make possible a gradual decrease of the number of churches in communities where the competition between many churches hinders the Christian cause. It would make possible immediately a far more effective Christian approach to a new community. This step toward church union, which is so essential in the United States, would leave unsolved the larger problem of Christian divisions rooted in differences of strongly held religious convictions. In the long run in this country, and now in many other countries, movements for church union must cross the lines that separate Episcopal from non-Episcopal Churches, and Lutheran Churches from other Protestant Churches. Concentration on this next step should not obscure the vision of an eventual wider unity; nor should it cause us to give less attention to those forms of federation, such as the Federal Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches, which today, because of their inclusiveness, express the Christian unity which exists in spite of those more difficult divisions.—J. C. B.

Editorial Notes

A CURIOUS united front between the Vatican and the Kremlin forced the United Nations to adopt a plan for the internationalization of Jerusalem which will bring no profit to anyone.

Both Israel and Trans-Jordan have announced their determination to defy it. This will put Israel in the position of defying the will of the United Nations for the first time. It puts the United Nations in the position of being threatened with disobedience

without the chance of applying sanctions. Or does anyone think that Britain and America, who did not believe in the adequacy of the plan adopted, will put themselves out to apply economic sanctions? Will the Vatican get any credit for teaming up with Russia and forcing the UN to adopt a plan which is not enforceable? Perhaps the only one to gain from the whole transaction will be Russia. In the remote possibility of the success of the plan it will have its hand in a center of power in the Middle East. If, as is probable, the plan does not succeed, it will have served to sow confusion in the ranks of the Western powers.

The Protestant Churches were unable to exert any influence in the situation, because there was no agreement among them except that they all accepted the principle that access to the holy places and the rights of minorities should be guaranteed by UN authority. Most of them also had passed resolutions in favor of "internationalization." Since every plan proposed came within the category of this general phrase, it was not possible for Protestant leaders to support any particular plan. Insofar as Protestant denominations were specific in their proposals, they seemed to envisage an internationalized Jerusalem, separated from Israel and Jordan, and governed by the UN. They seemed, therefore, to be in general agreement with the Vatican plan.

The plan adopted should have been opposed, not only because it cannot be enforced upon two recalcitrant nations, but also because it offers no guarantees of religious liberty for minority groups in the two nations outside of the internationalized city. In view of these inadequacies the question arises why the plan for a "curatorship," acting as a UN watchdog and guaranteeing both the rights of religious minorities and access to the holy places, was not taken more seriously.

The probable reason is that the Arab fear that ultimately the new state of Israel will not be content with its present boundaries is shared by many non-Arab nations. They think of an internationalized city as a kind of border policeman, preventing further expansion. It is questionable whether it would be a very successful deterrent to military ventures, but that does not change the widespread apprehension.

In our opinion the state of Israel should long since have given more solemn assurances than it has given about its territorial ambitions, or rather about the limits of its ambitions. We rather suspect that one reason why it cannot do this is because there are extremist nationalist elements in Israel which would challenge such assurances. The government of Israel is in the position of openly avow-

ing that the assurance is not necessary; but being unable to give it precisely because the assurance is necessary. We mention this not to embarrass the government of Israel, but to explain that the support for the internationalization of the city of Jerusalem by non-Catholic and non-communist demo-

cratic forces is not necessarily prompted by malevolence toward Israel.

Even if a special meeting of the UN rescinds the present unworkable plan, some scheme for a territorial enclave will be adopted unless fears about the territorial expansion of Israel are set at rest.—R.N.

The Church and American Policy in the Far East*

THE advance of communism in the Far East, signaled by the proclamation on October 1, 1949, of the "People's Republic of China," is a matter of deep concern to the American people. Despite developments deemed to be inimical to our cherished democratic ideals, it remains within the power of the United States to help shape the destiny of the 1,200,000,000 people of Asia.

This is true because the record of our nation, in the main, has been one of sincere friendship for the peoples of the Far East. The right of the Chinese people to develop their political institutions without interference from without has long been a cardinal principle of American policy. For fifty years our Government has opposed efforts to establish "spheres of influence" in China. The "Open Door" and related policies encouraged the Chinese people to resist encroachment upon their sovereign rights. In opposing Japan's Twenty-One Demands, the United States championed the territorial integrity of China. In remitting to the Chinese Government the larger part of the Boxer indemnity payments, our country sought to build a bridge of understanding between East and West. Our nation has stood before the world as the advocate of political freedom for subject peoples. In pursuance of this policy the Philippine Islands achieved their independence. Influential voices in America have been lifted in support of human rights in Asia. The traditional American mood, respecting the peoples of Asia, has been one of opposition to economic slavery, political tutelage, and dictatorship of the few over the many.

Despite this record of American friendship for the peoples of the Far East, the ideological clash and power struggle which today engulf the world have adversely affected the moral position of our nation in Asia. This has been due, in part, to the spreading of hostile propaganda and, in part, to the seeming inability of our nation to formulate a policy related to the realities of the revolutionary era emerging in Asia.

* This is the official statement adopted by the Executive Committee of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, which met in Atlanta, Georgia, December 6, 1949. We publish it in full because we believe it is an important expression of Christian consensus on the relation of our nation to the Orient.

We believe the time has come for the United States unequivocally to restate its concern for those Asiatic peoples who today are struggling for higher standards of living and for equal rights within the world community.

We believe the United States should reaffirm with great vigor and clarity the long-standing American determination to work for the territorial integrity and political freedom of Oriental peoples.

We believe our churches would welcome a bold proclamation of policy by the President of the United States, delivered before a joint session of the Congress, the purpose of which would be to encourage the peoples of Asia to believe that the best way to achieve their awakened desires is not civil war and revolution with their dangers of a permanent totalitarianism, but an orderly and progressive march toward the goal of a free and democratic Asia.

We believe the further advance of communism in China and Asia cannot permanently be stopped by military action. Such military assistance as the United States placed at the disposal of the Chinese Nationalists proved unavailing. The reasons for this are many, but among these reasons is the fact that the civil war in China is not only a test of arms, it is also, in part, a social and political convulsion of revolutionary proportions. Similarly, the thrust of communism in other parts of Asia is only in part a military operation; in other and more important respects it has taken advantage of a mass protest against grinding poverty, economic injustice, social maladjustment, and political subservience to the West. Accordingly, neither the creation of a Pacific military alliance, nor the granting of military assistance by the United States to the non-communist forces of the Far East, would alone suffice to establish in that area the conditions of a just and durable peace.

Nor do we believe that the challenge to the West deriving from the revolutionary upsurge of Asia's millions can be met by the hasty improvisation of national policy designed to counter the spread of communism first in one country, then in another. It is a matter genuinely to be deplored that the United States, with its democratic traditions and its long established commitment to freedom for sub-

ject and dependent peoples, has become aligned in popular world opinion with the maintenance of the *status quo* rather than with the forces making for a new Asia. This has been due, in part, to the confusion in the public mind regarding the developing crisis in Asia. The fear that Russia might control Asia must not tempt us into a reliance upon military strategy when it is obvious that communist influence cannot be arrested apart from a general effort to further the economic betterment and growing independence of the Asiatic peoples. The real issue is whether or not our government is prepared to advance the greater welfare of the peoples of Asia, with higher standards of living, and with cultural, social, and political institutions which will accord with the free choice of the peoples directly concerned.

We believe the United States should promote in every possible way the economic wellbeing of the peoples of the Far East. An improved standard of living for Asia's millions is essential to the establishment of democratic institutions in the Orient. The primary resources with which the West must promote peace in the Pacific are ideas, not atomic bombs; food, not guns; plowshares, not swords; tools of production, not implements of destruction. If communism thrives under conditions of poverty, hunger, and social unrest, so too, will democracy advance under conditions of social and economic improvement.

Our government, accordingly, should energetically support the United Nations program of technical assistance, a program which has been reinforced by President Truman's proposal "for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of under-developed areas." This technical assistance should be designed to contribute to the freedom and livelihood of the peoples concerned, under whatever forms of government these values can be advanced.

It is important, too, that the United States cooperate wholeheartedly with the United Nations' Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East. This Commission aims to increase agricultural production, stimulate industrial development, promote international trade, encourage technical training, and control of the flood waters of the great rivers in whose valleys there lives half the population of Asia and the Far East. These are aims which can and must be achieved if Asiatic peoples are to be delivered from the menace of a totalitarianism attended by violence and coercion.

The success of any program of technical assistance, however, will depend not alone upon industrial and scientific know-how but also upon the spiritual outlook and the cultural qualifications of the experts who are assigned to Asia. In addition to their specialized competence such persons should be well grounded in the cultural heritage of the Far East.

They should be made acquainted with the language, customs, and ideals of the people to whom they are sent. Otherwise the cause of democracy might be irreparably damaged, however much the economic status of the Asiatic peoples might be improved.

We believe the United States should proclaim its purpose to work for an early peace settlement with Japan. It should be possible to negotiate a peace settlement with Japan, the effect of which would be to establish a mutuality of interests between that country and her neighbors and with the West. The creation in Japan of a free state, under conditions which would safeguard the rights and ensure the dignities of her people and which would accelerate the processes of economic and moral recovery, could be a powerful stimulus in the evolution of a democratic Asia.

We believe the United States, in collaboration with the democratic States of the West, should carry forward a program of continuing consultation among their respective Ambassadors, Ministers and Consular Officers with the view to clarifying the policy of government, in relation to the political, economic, and cultural needs of Asiatic peoples. If such regional consultations are deemed to be necessary for the Atlantic States, they are no less necessary for those States having a common interest in Asia. As a part of this consultation process the United States might well send to and receive from Asiatic countries, deputations of journalists, educators, lawmakers, labor, industrial and religious leaders, both for the purpose of establishing a community of interests as between East and West and for the enlightenment of the American people respecting the emerging situation in Asia.

We believe the United States, in cooperation with the United Nations, should labor incessantly for the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for the peoples of Asia. The status of inferiority thus far imposed upon these people by the West is coming to an end. Since the war India, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Burma, Ceylon, have acquired their independence. The United States of Indonesia is in the process of formation. This rapid succession of peoples toward political freedom heralds the dawn of a new era in the Far East. The International Trusteeship System of the United Nations provides opportunity for the United States and other member nations to advance the economic, social and educational progress of the peoples of the trust territories and to develop self-government. The United States, which has entered into a trust agreement respecting the former Japanese mandated islands and which is the sole power occupying Okinawa, has it within its power to provide a living demonstration of its purpose to respect the rights and to promote the well-being of the inhabitants of these areas. Support for and participation in the activities of the Trusteeship Council

should be regarded by the United States as a priority of the highest importance.

We believe the United States, as an earnest of its purpose to respect the rights and freedoms and dignities of Asiatic peoples, should complete the process of amending its immigration and naturalization laws so that, within the quota system, all discriminatory statutes based upon considerations of color or nationality, would be removed. All Oriental peoples, now racially ineligible for citizenship, should be granted the same status in relation to our immigration and naturalization laws as is or may be accorded the peoples of China, India and the Philippine Islands.

In its more fundamental aspects the crisis in Asia cannot be met by the actions of government. There is a spiritual vacuum in the Far East which must be filled if there is to be achieved a free Asia at peace with itself and with the world. This spiritual vacuum can be filled by the Christian community. The historic religions of Asia, however much they may have shaped the cultural patterns of the past, lack the dynamics which are required to give spiritual direction to the revolutionary upsurge of Asia's millions. In Christ there can be found the power permanently to transform the old order in Asia into a new order of democratic freedom and of social justice.

We point to the faithful and courageous Christian minority in Asia with admiration and thanksgiving. We call upon the Christian community of America to join with the Christian community in Asia in advancing a movement of spiritual reformation as daring in its conception and as revolutionary in its effects as was the Christian enterprise of the early Apostles. Christian youth in Asia, America and other lands, should be encouraged to participate in a veritable crusade to bring the whole of the Far East into a knowledge of Christ. Our churches, colleges and theological seminaries should undertake the enlistment of a vastly expanded missionary personnel firmly grounded in the Christian faith and with a thorough understanding of the methods and techniques by which secular ideologies are propagated. New types of missionary endeavor should be explored which would more effectively relate the gospel of Christ to the struggles of Oriental peoples for economic and political justice. Nor can the influence of the Christian gospel be made pervasive among the masses of Asia as long as Christians of the West give so sparingly of their earthly treasure to exalt the name of Christ in lands other than our own. If the secular influences currently sweeping over Asia are to be countered by the healing and reconciling influence of Christianity, our people must be prepared substantially to increase their total giving for the world mission of the church.

The Christian enterprise in Asiatic lands is believed by its critics and by many of its friends, to be

too much dominated by the patterns of the West. The churches of Christ in America, in their relations with Orientals, should seek to widen their geographical thinking to the end that Christ may be received among the people as One for whom there is no East or West. It is the inescapable duty of Christians everywhere to seek a spiritual unity in Christ that transcends all considerations of race or nationality. Only in this manner can Christianity be made a living and dynamic force among Asiatic peoples.

We believe it is unrealistic to suppose that the old patterns of missionary activity, predicated as they have too often been, upon denominational priorities, will suffice to win Asia to Christ. The churches of the United States, therefore, should further consolidate their ministry of evangelism, education and social services throughout the Asiatic world. Pride of sectarian heritage must be transcended as Christians journey from the West to the East to exalt Him who is the Saviour of the world and as leaders of the Younger Churches visit the West to enrich and quicken our faith.

The Burden of Europe*

W. A. VISSER T'HOOF

ACCORDING to the prophets' interpretation of the meaning of history—the Biblical interpretation—God gives to each of the great civilizations its own peculiar task. When that civilization ceases to allow itself to be used as an instrument of God's purpose, however, when its divine commission leads to ownership of material wealth and to self-assertion, judgment overwhelms it. Then it is humbled until the world cries: "Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms?" (Isa. 14:16.) This is exactly what has happened to Europe. Europe had been entrusted with the light of the Gospel so that she might hand it on. She owes her own life and its spiritual and moral powers to this Gospel. And so this small continent became the spiritual and political center of the world. But it spoke as did Assyria in the book of the prophet Isaiah: "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom. . . . And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped." (Isa. 10:13-14.) But the Lord is come and asks: "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? . . . Therefore shall the Lord . . . send among his fat ones lean-

* This article by the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Visser t'Hooft, is translated and slightly abbreviated from *Die Zeichen der Zeit*, in which it was first published.

ness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like a burning of a fire." (Isa. 10:15-16.) Europe-Assyria is judged—her pride must have a fall. She must be reminded that it was not her own power which made it possible for her to fulfill her spiritual mission. But judgment need not mean extinction. It *can* mean a new beginning. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. . . ." (Heb. 12:6.)

Such a new beginning depends on a genuine repentance, a true repentance in which the sin which has been committed is clearly recognized, and which includes a willingness to be renewed. The sin of the great civilizations and cultures is always the same. It is the sin which proclaims a God-given grace to be an excellence achieved by man, and uses this grace for robbery instead of service. . . .

But how are we to give more definite content to (our) view of Europe's position? What political and social reality is to inform this new Europe? Or, to put it in the language of the man in the street: "We know what the reactionaries want. We know what the Communists want. But we have no idea what you are really after!" That is a genuine challenge. There are spiritual forces existing in Europe which are looking for new solutions and which refuse to accept the "either—or" of political slogans. It is really tragic that they have always been so vague and inexact in their language, and so incapable of giving their ideas political and social form. We must consider, however, that everything new and everything which is still in the theoretical stage is always at a terrible disadvantage compared with the old firmly-rooted systems. And besides, in the present two-dimensional world, in which people are constantly trying to persuade us that there are only two possibilities, the system of the East or that of the West, anyone who asserts *tertium datur* (there is a third way) really does sound like one crying in the wilderness. A dialectical approach which remains independent of the dominant opinions of the day looks like an attitude of neutrality in a life and death struggle, or like the attitude of an onlooker at a time when active participation would be the only worthy and manly thing.

However, there is no *need* for this to be so. On the contrary: it *can* be the sole really positive attitude. It is a positive attitude when it is founded on the conviction that the great ideologies, whose conflict now embraces the whole world, cannot accomplish the task of the present hour: to give Europe's masses that feeling of a purposeful existence without which they cannot live. For life does not make sense when freedom is swallowed up in justice. Nor does it make sense when a formal freedom reduces justice to a farce. Life makes sense when—to use the language of the Amsterdam Assembly—man lives in a responsible society, a society in which freedom and justice have been brought into a certain degree of harmony.

The early Christians were called by their enemies a *tertium genus* (a third race), because they broke through the accepted categories of the classical world and showed new powers that went to make an entirely new world. In their day they appeared to be a completely powerless "third force" which people could not classify according to their preconceived ideas. Perhaps our generation of Christians should keep this example in mind. For here we recognize the fact that this particular third force does not imply a feeble compromise nor a middle course between two opposite points of view. The example of the "third race" in the early Christian era shows us that we need to think not so much in terms of space, but rather in terms of time. For what was the outstanding thing about these first Christians? Their peculiar understanding of history, their belief that the act of God in Christ had brought a completely new faith into the world, and that the church, which had come into being through this act of God, meant a new beginning just because of this same creative act. In other words, Christian power is only effective as it should be when it is the power of Tomorrow. That is the attitude which does not hark back to the past, nor attempt to fit in with the present, but which points forward to the new day.

The Responsibility of the Churches

Nobody is to think that this means refusing to face the tasks before us. On the contrary, it means soberly attacking the tasks of the day. In a world in which states and parties act to a very great extent with propaganda purposes in view, there is a crying need for men and women who form their opinions about political and social life from the point of view quite simply of helping their neighbor. In a world where religion is relativized but politics is absolutized, we need people who stand firmly on the foundation of an absolute and unshakable truth, and who, as a result, can see political matters in the right perspective, that is, as very provisional and very transitory necessities. On the political level the best that Europe can do is to free herself from the ideologies, and thereby help the rest of the world to free itself from the madness which allows it to ascribe eternal worth to its political systems. At the moment ideological passions actually form the substitute for mental and spiritual life. So we shall not conquer them unless we succeed in filling, in another and better way, the great vacuum that they are trying to fill. With that we come back again to the great responsibility of the churches.

If it is true that Europe can live only if she rediscovers her own peculiar way; if it is true that this cannot be one of the old ways, nor any one of the ways of the powerful ideologies; further, if it is true that we can only overcome the temptation found in the ideologies with the message of Him before Whom all things are seen in their own proper

place, and politics becomes a humble service—then, indeed the Christian church carries a tremendously great responsibility in Europe. Then it is a question of life and death whether she will come out of her dreadful isolation from the life of the masses, whether she will escape from the prison she has made for herself of backwardness and complacency, and will be able to fulfill her mission to the millions who have no shepherd. The remarkable signs of real life in the European churches, especially during the war—the return to the Bible as a source of new insight and new life, the great theological movement—all these give ground for hope, but they are far from being a sufficient answer on the part of the church to God's challenge in the present hour. For this challenge—as it comes to us through the misled, confused, and often despairing masses about us—demands far more. It demands not only that the church should renew herself, but that she should turn her face towards the world. We need in Europe today a movement of the Gospel supported by men, who in their devotion, in their readiness for sacrifice, and above all in their ability really to speak to the masses, are comparable with the men of the foreign mission movement of the nineteenth century.

We may not take it as at all self-evident that Europe is to have a future. We have no assurance that the gates of Hell will not prevail against her. We must reckon with the possibility that Europe's role is at an end. But if that should be so, then God grant that the reason may not be the failure of the church in this our day and generation. It may be that God looks upon Europe as the servant who

refused to trade with the pound which was entrusted to him. Then there would be no hope. But it might yet be that God looks upon Europe as the prodigal son, whom he would take to himself again. The Christian church must hope and pray that the Father will once more receive his son, if, after long wanderings, he should repent and return.

Communication

Dear Sir:

I want to express my thanks for the regular receipt of *CHRISTIANITY AND CRISIS*. I read the paper with great interest and am impressed by its objectivity and by its effort at thoroughness of dealing with the issues of our day.

Sometime I would like to report to you on the German situation. We read again and again in the papers that American newspapers frequently report an alleged reawakening of Nazism, Nationalism and Militarism in Germany. I can report that we Christian pastors can find little evidence of this. There are, of course, many who are dissatisfied and frustrated. The inadequate de-Nazification program has made for discontent, but the great majority of the German people certainly show no desire for the re-birth of Nazism, Nationalism and Militarism. I believe that this false picture frequently arises from the occasional remarks of irresponsible people and the polemical necessities of party politics.

KIRCHENRAT D. JOHANNES STEINWEG.

(16) Kassel-Brasselsberg, Hessen, Germany.

The World Church: News and Notes

Open Letter to Karl Barth

The German religious journal *Unterwegs* recently published an "Open Letter" by Ernst Tillich of Berlin in reply to Karl Barth's widely discussed address in Berlin on "The Church Between East and West." In this address Barth had, as is his wont, carefully balanced the virtues and vices of Russia and the U.S.A. to make them appear as equal as possible. Tillich suggests that to avoid pretension, the address should have been entitled "The Church in Switzerland Between East and West"; or even better, "The Voice of a Christian of the Swiss Church Between East and West." So that the political opinions expressed would not seem to be *ex cathedra* it might even be advisable to claim no more than what would be implied in the title: "The Voice of a Christian theologian interested in politics, etc."

Tillich objects to such careful balancing of "facts" as the "vassalage of Poland to the U.S.S.R. and the vassalage of Britain to the United States" as if the cohesion of the Western nations were identical with the type of cohesion established by Russia. His main objection to the Barthian analysis is that Barth deals with three economic systems, "communism, economic

liberalism and the European 'third way,'" and identifies the neutrality of the church between communism and economic liberalism with the neutrality of Europe between them. "I will not give you the figures," declares Tillich, "of the number of people who have been lost in the Soviet concentration camps, forced labor camps and deportations, and I will not nicely balance them against the victims of Spanish tyranny. I only say that I must be against this system and I think the church must also oppose it. . . . You speak of power-political constellations and various economic systems, but you speak only in a subordinate clause of the 'dignity and holiness of human freedom.'" But that is for Tillich the real question upon which neutrality is not possible.

Tillich analyzes Barth's position finally as follows: "You are so concerned about the possible bias of your own, and the Swiss view, that you fail to see anything objectively in your preoccupation with objectivity. You seek to be too shrewd, but your political shrewdness has nothing of the innocence of the church in it. It is terrifying to see how many biased judgments you make, obviously in an effort to balance the biases you dis-

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covered among your audience in favor of the U.S.A. . . . You neither appreciate the difference between Communist theory and praxis nor the similarity between Nazi and Communist practice."

The World Council Known by Its Enemies

Re-editing the old adage that a man shall be known by the company he keeps, Dr. Henry Smith Leiper, associate general secretary of the World Council of Churches, has declared that the ecumenical movement can be known by the opposition it has aroused.

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Speaking at the annual meeting of the Friends of the World Council of Churches held on December 13 in New York City, Dr. Leiper gave a gusty description of sundry "enemies of ecumenicity."

"... First, the nervous conservatives who take fright at the thought that Christ might really turn the world upside down through a new vision of what is involved in having His will done on earth as it is in heaven.

"Second, the Moscow Patriarchate and those influenced by it in this and other lands who see the fundamental challenge to dictatorship, the police state and atheistic communism which this movement creates.

"Third, the over-eager proponents of immediate merger of all churches who want to see the Council make itself a marriage bureau or a matchmaker. These friends forget that the initiative in organic union must come from the autonomous bodies which compose the Council to which they have given no mandate to coerce them!

"Fourth, the demagogic fundamentalists who seek to disrupt any and all church movements which do not conform to their own rigid patterns of doctrine. These have become increasingly vocal of late and have disturbed many with their incredible misrepresentations and brazen self-assertion, as notably at Bangkok.

"Fifth, the incurable denominationalists who view even the movements for ecumenical fellowship solely from the point of view of their own group interests narrowly conceived."—*Ecumenical Press Service*, New York

Dibelius Confers With Eastern Zone President

Bishop Otto Dibelius of Berlin conferred with Wilhelm Pieck, president of the Eastern German Democratic Republic, on problems affecting the Evangelical Church in the Soviet zone of occupation.

The conference, which took place at President Pieck's residence at Neiderschoenhausen Castle, marked the first time that Bishop Dibelius had met the President.

Accompanying Bishop Dibelius was Dean Heinrich Greuber of Berlin, who is an old acquaintance of President Pieck, having worked with him for a time on an organization made up of victims of Nazi persecution.

No information was available as to the matters discussed or the decisions, if any, reached by the conferees.

According to ADN, Soviet-licensed news agency, the meeting was marked by "a friendly talk on the mutual relations between the government and the Protestant Church."—*Religious News Service*

American Seminar in Europe

Dr. Sherwood Eddy announces that his study seminar to Europe, interrupted for a decade, will be resumed this summer and will include Britain, Holland, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy and France in its program. The inclusive costs will be \$1,370 with tourist class travel on Atlantic steamers, and \$1,505 cabin class. Applications from leaders in the church and education may be made to Dr. Eddy at P. O. Box 357, Grand Central Station, New York 17, New York.